

## Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

IO-10 SCCT-01 /087 W

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R 131351Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5783

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 BEIRUT 10330

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON AFTER SIX WEEKS OF THE "SALVATION CABINET"

REF: (A) BEIRUT 8317; (B) BEIRUT 8335; (C) BEIRUT 8382;

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(D) BEIRUT 9052; (E) BEIRUT 9571; (F) BEIRUT 9597

1. SUMMARY: IN POWER FOR SIX WEEKS, KARAME'S "SALVATION CABINET" HAS MORE OR LESS SUCCESSFULLY MAINTAINED A GOOD PUBLIC IMAGE, AND THIS POSTURE HAS NOT BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY ERODED BY FREQUENT PUBLIC CRITICISMS FROM OPPOSITIONISTS LIKE JUMBLATT. THE CABINET'S MOST URGENT TASK HAS BEEN TO RESTORE SECURITY, AND IT HAS COPEd WITH THIS VOLATILE PROBLEM AS WELL AS COULD BE EXPECTED. HOWEVER, AT ANY MOMENT A SEEMINGLY MINOR INCIDENT COULD TOUCH OFF "ROUND FOUR." AND THERE ARE THREE UNDERLYING ISSUES THAT REFUSE TO DISAPPEAR AND HAVE YET TO BE EFFECTIVELY TACKLED: (A) SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR DEPRIVED GROUPS, (B) LEBANON'S SOVEREIGNTY VIS-A-VIS THE FEDAYEEN, AND (C) THE DELICATE CONFESSIONAL BALANCE.

2. EMERGING FROM RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IS A PHENOMENON THAT MAY BECOME INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT: THE REALIZATION BY BOTH CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS THAT THE MARONITE PRESIDENT, FRANGIE, HAS CEDED THE DRIVER'S SEAT IN POLICY MATTERS TO THE SUNNI PREMIER, KARAME. THE SUNNIS ARE PUSHING THEIR ADVANTAGE, WHILE CHRISTIANS EXPRESS ALARM OVER THE "PRECEDENT" THAT FRANGIE HAS INADVERTENTLY ESTABLISHED. ONE MAY QUESTION WHETHER FRANGIE, WHO IS SENSITIVE ABOUT PREROGATIVES, WILL TOLERATE HIS BACK-SEAT POSITION INDEFINITELY. HE MAY TRY TO REDRESS THE BALANCE THROUGH SOME HEEDLESS MOVE, THOUGH AT THE MOMENT FRANGIE'S NATURAL TENDENCIES IN THAT DIRECTION ARE HELD IN CHECK.

3. APART FROM HIS DOMESTIC POLICIES, KARAME'S MOST NOTEWORTHY EFFORT TO DATE HAS BEEN TO REINFORCE GOOD RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AND OTHER FRIENDLY ARAB STATES, SINCE THE ARAB CONNECTION IS VITAL TO LEBANON'S FATE, GOOD RESULTS IN THIS DOMAIN MAY GAIN VALUABLE TIME FOR KARAME'S INTERNAL STABILIZATION POLICIES.

4. NONE OF KARAME'S ACTIONS UP TO NOW HAS CONVINCED MANY LEBANESE THAT THE COUNTRY'S OUTLOOK IS GOOD. PESSIMISM IS RAMPANT. YET A "SILENT MAJORITY," HOPING THAT A MIRACLE WILL OCCUR, SUPPORTS THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION. KARAME MAY PULL OFF THE MIRACLE, BUT IF HE CANNOT, LEBANON IS IN FOR A LONG HOT WINTER. END SUMMARY.  
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5. RASHID KARAME'S 6-MAN CABINET WAS FORMED JULY - AND, WHILE NOT RECEIVING THE PARLIAMENT'S CONFIDENCE UNTIL JULY 15, BEGAN TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY ALMOST AT ONCE. OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE KARAME GOVERNMENT AS OF MID-AUGUST IS GIVEN BELOW:

"THE SIX"

6. BEING AN EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT, KARAME'S "SIX" INTEND TO TRANSFER POWER AT SOME UNDISCLOSED TIME TO ANOTHER, PROBABLY LARGER, CABINET. NEANWHILE THEY HAVE MORE OR LESS SUCCESSFULLY MAINTAINED THE IMAGE OF MODERATION AND ENERGY ON WHICH THEY MUST DEPEND TO ACCOMPLISH THE TICKLISH JOB OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. AS EXPECTED, KARAME AND FORMER PRES CAMILLE CHAMOUN HAVE PROVED TO BE THE STARS OF THE TEAM, BUT GHASSAN TUENI IS GETTING MANY HEADLINES BY ENERGETICALLY TACKLING THE OIL PROBLEM AND HOUSING.

7. THE LACK OF ANY SEMBLANCE OF REPRESENTATION FOR THE POWERFUL DRUZE LEFTIST KAMAL JUMBLATT IS OFTEN SEEN AS A FAILING, BUT AN UNAVOIDABLE ONE AT THIS STAGE. TRUE TO FORM, HE HAS PEPPERED THE ATMOSPHERE WITH FREQUENT CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT. HIS ATTACKS ARE A STEADY FEATURE OF THE DAILY PRESS BUT HAVE FAILED TO EROD SIGNIFICANTLY THE GENERALLY GOOD PUBLIC IMAGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT ENJOYS.

SECURITY: KEEPING THE LID ON

8. KARAME'S MOST URGENT TASK HAS BEEN THE RESTORATION OF SECURITY. THE LAST SIX WEEKS WERE PUNCTUATED BY A SERIES OF MINI-CRISES THAT TEMPORARILY STIRRED UP TENSIONS, BUT NONE OF THESE GOT OUT OF HAND. ON JULY 23, FOR EXAMPLE, A TOBACCO VENDOR WAS ARRESTED IN SOUTH BEIRUT FOR SELLING CIGARETTES ILLEGALLY. SINCE HE HAPPENED TO BE A MEMBER OF A LEFTIST GROUP, THE RUMOR QUICKLY CIRCULATED THAT HE HAD BEEN "KIDNAPPED." (IT IS A FAIR QUESTION WHY THE POLICE PICKED ON HIM FOR THIS EXCEEDINGLY COMMON OFFENSE.) RIVAL GROUPS STARTED SHOOTING. HOWEVER, THE SECURITY FORCES QUICKLY INTERVENED AND THE MAN WAS SOON RELEASED. THIS ACTION QUIETED THINGS DOWN, ALTHOUGH PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN LAW AND ORDER SUFFERED ANOTHER SETBACK. THIS HAS BEEN THE PATTERN SO FAR, AND

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ONE MUST GIVE HIGH MARKS TO INTMIN CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND THE SECURITY FORCES FOR KEEPING THE LID ONE. QUICK POLICE REACTION, REASONABLY GOOD OFFICIAL LIAISON WITH THE FEDAYEEN AND THE PHALANGE, A PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY DESIGNED TO SPIKE RUMORS AND CALM TEMPER, AND ABOVE ALL A GENERAL WILLINGNESS BY SECURITY FORCES TO HEAD OFF FIGHTS AT ALL COSTS ARE THE MAIN FEATURES OF CURRENT "SECURITY" STEPS.

9. BUT NOT MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE THIS WILL LAST. AT ANY MOMENT A SEEMINGLY UNIMPORTANT INCIDENT--PERHAPS UNRELATED IN ORIGIN TO POLITICAL ISSUES--COULD SPREAD LIKE A PRAIRIE FIRE TO BECOME "ROUND FOUR." THIS IS PARTICULARLY LIKELY ONCE THE LEFTIST GROUPS AND THE PHALANGE REPLENISH THEIR ARSENALS. BOTH SIDES ARE IMPORTING WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION. THERE ARE DIRE PREDICTIONS FROM EACH CAMP OF RENEWED STRIFE IN SEPTEMBER OR

OCTOBER--STARTED, OF COURSE, BY "THEM."

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

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AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 BEIRUT 10330

10. THE ATMOSPHERE OF MUTUAL SUSPICION IS ALMOST THICK  
ENOUGH TO CUT WITH A KNIFE. IT DRIVES OTHERWISE PEACEFUL CITI-  
ZENS INTO SOMETHING OF A BARRICADE MENTALITY. WEAPONS ARE  
PRIZES AT CHURCH RAFFLES. LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS STAY HOME

AT NIGHT. NORMALLY PEACEFUL PERSONS ARE VOLUNTEERING FOR  
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CLANDESTINE MILITARY TRAINING. RUMORS ARE RAMPANT.

11. THE ATMOSPHERE IS POISONED BY EXTREMIST GROUPS HAVING LITTLE INTEREST IN A VIABLE LEBANESE REPUBLIC. THE FAR LEFT, THOUGH SPLINTERED, HOPES TO ESTABLISH A MARXIST STATE. TO THE PALESTINIAN "REJECTION FRONT" IT IS AXIOMATIC THAT ARAB REGIMES LIKE LEBANON'S MUST BE TOPPLED ON THE ROAD TO TOTAL VICTORY IN PALESTINE. SOME RADICAL GROUPS IN LEBANON WOULD RATHER SEE CIVIL WAR THAN CIVIL PEACE.

12. WORKING AGAINST THESE TENDENCIES IS LITTLE MORE THAN A GENERALIZED HOPE FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, COMBINED WITH WIDESPREAD HORROR OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF CIVIL STRIFE. EVEN THE WARRING CAMPS SENSE THAT A "BALANCE OF TERROR EXISTS, EACH REALIZING THAT AN ALL-OUT BATTLE WOULD BE COSTLY AND WOULD PROBABLY SETTLE NOTHING. FORTUNATELY, THESE FEELINGS ARE NOURISHED BY POWERFUL FIGURES IN BOTH THE MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES. THROUGHOUT JULY AND EARLY AUGUST FREQUENT MEETINGS OF RELIGIOUS AND LAY LEADERS OF NEARLY ALL STRIPES WERE PUBLICLY REPORTED. THE RECONCILIATION THEME WAS STRESSED IN ALL THESE DIALOGUES. THE JULY 22 STATEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC PRELATES, PRAISED LATER BY THE SUNNI MUFTI (REF F), WAS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THIS SPIRIT, WHICH IS ONE OF KARAME'S FEW SOURCES OF STRENGTH.

#### UNDERLYING ISSUES

13. AS IF KARAME'S TASK WERE NOT ALREADY HARD ENOUGH, THERE ARE THREE ISSUES UNDERLYING THE CIVIL STRIFE FROM THE START WHICH REFUSE TO DISAPPEAR.

(A) SOCIAL JUSTICE: IT IS STRIKING HOW OFTEN LEBANESE POLITICIANS SAY THEY RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR SOCIAL REFORM. BUT EQUALLY STRIKING IS THE DERISION THAT MANY KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS HEAP ON GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. REFORM IS AMJOR FOCUS OF KARAME'S STRATEGY FOR RESTORING NATIONAL EQUILIBRIUM OVER THE LONG TERM. AS A FIRST STEP, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED A LARGE-SCALE PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT (SEE REF E), SEEMINGLY AMBITIOUS. BUT OBSERVERS ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT THIS SAME PLAN WAS DEBATED ABOUT 15 YEARS AGO AND NEVER IMPLEMENTED, A FACT THAT THE CABINET CONVENIENTLY IGNORES. EVEN THOUGH THE PLAN MAY DO MUCH  
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GOOD IF IT PASSES THE POLITICAL HURDLES AHEAD OF IT, THE SPECTACLE OF THE GOVERNMENT RUMMAGING AROUND THE GRAVE-YARD OF DISCARDED PROJECTS FOR ITS REFORM PROGRAM CAUSES MANY TO QUESTION THE WILLINGNESS OF THIS SOCIETY AS NOW ESTABLISHED TO REFORM ITSELF MEANINGFULLY. THE PIOUS NOD GIVEN TO REFORM, ONE SUSPECTS, IS A FACADE. POLITICIANS LIKE KARAME WHOSE CONCERN FOR SOCIAL WELFARE MAY BE REASONABLY SERIOUS SEE THEMSELVES STYMIED BY THE COMPLACENCY OF THEIR COLLEAGUES, AND SO THEY END UP PUSHING THE MOST READILY AVAILABLE PROPOSALS IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A REFORMIST RECORD.

(B) LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY VS. THE FEDAYEE: AFTER BEING IN THE FOREFRONT OF "FIRST ROUND" LAST APRIL, THE ISSUE OF THE FEDAYEEN'S PROPER PLACE IN LEBANON CEDED PRIORITY IN THE SUBSEQUENT ROUNDS TO THE SOCIAL AND CONFESSIONAL QUESTIONS. THE PHALANGE EVENTUALLY SAW FIT TO REAFFIRM THAT IT FAVORED THE "RESISTANCE" LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE, AND THE MORE "MODERATE" FEDAYEEN REALIZED THAT THE LAST THING THEY NEEDED WAS TURMOIL IN LEBANON, WHICH AMONG OTHER THINGS HAS BEEN A MODEL OF THE INTERCOMMUNAL HARMONY WHICH THEY PROCLAIM FOR A FUTURE PALESTINE. THE FEDAYEEN AND THE PHALANGE ARE CURRENTLY RESPECTING THE CEASEFIRE, AND ONE OF THE CABINET'S MAIN CONCERNS HAS BEEN TO KEEP THEM ON THIS PEACEFUL TRACK. HOWEVER, THE ANTAGONISM HAS NOT DIED AWAY. THIS IS AN EMOTIONAL ISSUE TO MANY CHRISTIANS; FOR THEM A SOVEREIGN LEBANON IS CRUCIAL. ESTABLISHMENT CHRISTIANS, PERHAPS UNCONSCIOUSLY, FIND IT MORALLY EASIER TO FACE THE "FOREIGN" PALESTINIAN MENACE THAN THE BREAD-AND-BUTTER CLAIMS OF THE UNDERPRIVILEGED MOSLEMS. AS FOR THE NON-CHRISTIAN SIDE, THE "REJECTION FRONT" IS ALWAYS ANXIOUS TO PROVE, WITH ITS MARXIST FRIENDS, THAT LEBANON AS IT EXISTS TODAY IS ON THE VERGE OF DISASTER.

(C) CONFESSIONAL BALANCE: EVERY CRISIS IN LEBANON BOILS DOWN SOONER OR LATER TO THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE CONFESSIONAL BALANCE UNDERLYING THE CONSTITUTION. BUILT ON THE OUTDATED PREMISE THAT THE CHRISTIANS OUTNUMBER THE MOSLEMS, IT IS A READY-MADE ISSUE. THIS CRISIS IS NO EXCEPTION. A DEBATE OVER THE "NATIONAL CHARTER" AND ITS CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM DIVISION IS STILL IN PROGRESS. THERE IS EVEN TALK THAT A "NEW CHARTER" IS UNDER DISCUSSION IN THE RECONCILIATION DIALOGUE

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NOTED ABOVE JOINING CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM LEADERS; BUT, IF TRUE, THIS MOVE FACES SERIOUS OPPOSITION. THE ISSUE SPLITS THE CABINET AND CONCEIVABLY COULD CAUSE THE FIRST MAJOR CONTROVERSY AMONG THE SIX MINISTERS. KARAME HAS COME OUT FOR A CHANGE IN THE CHARTER; CHAMOUN HAS SPOKEN PUBLICLY AGAINST A CHANGE. MOST PROMINENT SUNNI MOSLEMS SUPPORT KARAME, AS WHEN MUFTI HASSAN KHALED RECENTLY

DENIED THE ESISTENCE OF THE CHARTER AS A SPECIFIC UNDER-  
STANDING AND CONCEDED ONLY THAT A FLEXIBLE SYSTEM HAD BEEN  
CREATED WHICH COULD EASILY BE ALTERED. CHRISTIANS NATUR-  
ALLY DEFEND THE STATUS QUO, THOUGH SOME CONCEDE THE NEED  
FOR ADJUSTMENTS. INTERESTINGLY, SHIITE IMAM MUSA SADR HAS  
PUBLICLY COME OUT FOR KEEPING A CHRISTIAN PRESIDENT--A  
POSITION NO DOUBT REFLECTING HIS COMMUNITY'S OWN HANGUPS  
ABOUT THE SUNNIS. THE PROSPECT IS FOR CONTINUED DEBATE,  
BUT NO DRASTIC CHANGES IN THE ABSENCE OF A MAJOR UPHEAVAL.  
A MODIFICATION OF THE EXISTING MILITARY STRUCTURE IS BEING  
SOUGHT AS AN OFFSHOOT OF THIS PROBLEM (REF E).

#### THE ECLIPSE OF FRANGIE

14. EMERGING FROM THIS WELTER OF INTERLOCKED ISSUES IS A  
PHENOMENON THAT MAY BE INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT IN COMING  
MONTHS: THE REALIZATION BY BOTH CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS  
THAT THE MARONITE PRESIDENT, FRANGIE, HAS CEDED THE DRIVER'S  
SEAT IN POLICY MATTERS TO THE SUNNI PREMIER, KARAME. THE  
SUNNIS FORCED KARAME ON FRANGIE, WHOSE EARLIER CHOICES OF  
WEAK SUNNIS LED TO THE LAST GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS. SOME SUN-  
NIS ARE FEELING THEIR OATS AFTER WINNING THIS TEST OF WILLS.  
STATEMENTS SUCH AS A RECENT ONE BY SAEB SALAAM THAT ALL  
FUTURE PRIME MINISTERS SHOULD BE CHOSEN BY THE MOSLEM  
HIERARCHY AND PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT AS A FAIT ACCOMPLI  
REASSURE NEITHER PRESIDENT NOR THE CHRISTIANS. SOME

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MRN: 1975BEIRUT010330 SEGMENT NUMBER: 000003 ERROR READING TEXT INDEX  
FILE; TELEGRAM TEXT FOR THIS SEGMENT IS UNAVAILABLE

## Message Attributes

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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 13 AUG 1975  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** MorefiRH  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**TAGS:** PINS, PINT, PFOR, LE  
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